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# The Bishop of Salisbury's SPEECH in the House of Lords, upon the Bill against Occasional Conformity.



My LORDS,

I am very glad to find, that how much Heat soever this Matter has raised Abroad, yet none of that has appeared in all this Debate. If a heat of Zeal has appeared here, yet nothing has been mixed with it Unbecoming the Dignity of this House, and the Solemnity of a Great Council. It is a disadvantage, especially to one of the Bench, to speak against any thing, that in the Sound, and first appearance, seems to be intended for the Service of the Church: And therefore, if I were not fully convinced that it is not so; but that how soever it may be intended by others, the Effects of it will be quite contrary; I could not have a Heart or a Face to speak against it; but could promote it with all possible zeal.

I confess, I am already bound up to this Particular; and determined by a Promise solemnly made to the Queen. Her Majesty Recommended this Bill to us with a peculiar Vehemence of Style, when She said, *She desired Words to express how Earnestly She desired to see Union and a Good Agreement among Her Subjects.* I am sure we must All want Words to express a due Sense of that Her Royal Tendernefs and Care of us. In Our Address to Her Majesty,

We promised not only to Avoid, but to Oppose every Thing that might tend to create Disunion and Discord. And I do freely own, that I had then this very thing in my Thoughts, and I believe a great many others had; and therefore I look on my self as under an Obligation, now to perform what I then promised.

I know, some of *Our Order*, as well as my self in Particular, have been very indecently, and I hope, very unjustly too, treated in many Printed Libels, upon this very Account; as if we were Enemies to the Church, because we cannot think this Bill good for its Service. The *Sensation* we are in sets us above the Answering every spiteful Writer. But next to the Queen we owe it to your Lordships, to satisfy You, if any thing sticks with You. We hope we may appeal to the World, and to our Dioceses in particular, whether our Labours do not shew a true Zeal for the Church in all its Concerns. We are the disciples of the Cross, and must go to a good Report, and ill Report; but I hope we are so well known, that we have lived so long in a Publick way, and have acted such a Part as it, that we may reckon our selves clear of Calumnies. Even *St. Paul* said, *I came a Fool in Glorying*; but it was when others compelled him to it.

We must freely own, that there have been such Severities among us in every Reign since the Reformation, that these are Blemishes not easily wiped off. The Burnings in King *Edward's* Reign, are the Reproach of that Time. The Capital Proceedings in *Q. Elizabeth's* Reign, and the Severe Act in the 35th Year of it, that punishes Meetings with Imprisonment, Banishment, and Death, are Blemishes even in that Long & Glorious Reign. The Repeal of that Act past in Both Houses in King *Charles's* time, and it is known by what Management it was, that it was not rendered to the Royal Assent. The Mention of Queen *Elizabeth's* Reign, leads me to take notice of what has been said with Relation to the Maxims by which She governed Her Self as if She had been inflexibly steady in the Observation of the Laws, in Matters of Religion: It is certain, that She treated the Papists all along with a very particular Intolerance. She would have the Peers excused from the Obligation to take the Oaths of Supremacy. She employed Papists in all Her Affairs: They were Privy-Councillors and Lords Lieutenants. Her Lord-Treasurer protested against all the Acts for the Reformation; and was known to be a Church-Papist, or an Occasional Conformist; and yet he continued in that great Post Fourteen Years, till he died. She encouraged the Occasional Conformity of Papists, and apprehended no Danger in that, even from them: And yet I hope, it will be acknowledged, that there was more reason to be afraid, considering both

their Numbers, and the Hopes she had for many Years of a Popish Successor, than we have now to be afraid of the Dissenters. She encouraged Occasional Conformity in the former, and no body was uneasy at it: But the Pope saw what it was like to end in, and therefore he took care to put a Stop to it.

The Severities in King *James's* Reign cast a Blot on it: And the Proceedings in the *Star-Chamber*, and the *High-Commission*, in His Son's Reign, are set forth by a Noble Historian, as Things that did not a little contribute to bring on us the Miseries of a Civil War. The Proceedings in King *Charles II.* Reign were Severe, and set on with bad Design. That in a Time both of War and of a Plague, such an Act as the Five Mile Act should have passed, will amaze all that do not know the Secret of that Time. Soon after the Restoration, it had been a very easy thing to have made up all Differences among us; but the Design was to enflame them; and that Matter was far driven; as we all know.

The Earl of *Bristol* upon that, called together a Meeting of the Chief of the Papists; and tendered them an Oath of Secrecy, as the Lord *Stafford* told me in the *Tower*. He told it likewise at the Bar of this House: He then told them, that the Breach between the Church and the Dissenters was now fixed; and would be carried further. It was therefore their Interest to make use of all the Provocations the Dissenters might meet with, and to offer their Assistance to them, in order to the engaging them



to petition for a General Toleration; yet they could never be brought to it. When the Declaration for a General Toleration in 72 was questioned in Parliament, which brought on the Act of the *Test*, set forth in the Preamble of this Bill, the Lord *Clifford* got some to move for a Clause in favour of the Dissenters, hoping that would have provoked either the one Side, or the other; and that either the Church Party might be offended with the Motion, or the Dissenters with refusing it: That was stoppt by Alderman *Love*, who desired, That though his Own Perswasion was well known, yet that nothing with relation to them might intervene, to stop the Security that the Nation and the *Protestant* Religion would have by that Act: In this he was seconded by most of that Party; so that this Act was obtained in some measure by their Assistance, and therefore it would be hard to turn it against them. The King was then highly offended with them for their giving up his Declaration: This wrought so much on that House, that was so zealous for the Church, that they ordered a Bill to be brought in for the ease of *Protestant* Dissenters, in which little progress was indeed made; yet to the end of that Parliament, tho' Conventicles were held very publicly, they never passed a Vote, or made an Address against them.

In the end of King *Charles* Reign we all remember that a new Prosecution of them was set on foot; and even then when the Severities against them were very hard, they were so-

licitated by the Agents of the Court to petition for a General Toleration; but they could not be prevailed on. What some of them did in King *James's* Reign is well known, and cannot be excused. By all this we see, that the whole Management with Relation to Dissenters, was an Artifice to advance a Popish Interest, which must needs give a just Jealousie of every thing that looks that way. After the late King had delivered us from all our Fears and Dangers, to whose Memory (let Ungrateful and Malicious Men treat Him as they please) we owe Our present Happiness, and that we are now sitting here. His next Care was to secure the Church of *England* by the Act of Toleration; which has not only set the Dissenters at Ease, but has made the Church both stronger and safer. Since God hath so blessed our Labour, that we see that the Dissenters increase as much Strength as we do gain by it.

The Heat raised by those Dissensions is much allay'd, and their Numbers are abated, by a moderate Computation, at least a Fourth part, if not a Third part. But now they are alarm'd, and begin to put on more Zeal, for they apprehend the Toleration is aimed at: And that how little soever seems to be in this Bill it is a Step, and will be followed by more that are kept in reserve till the Point is once gained. The next Step may be for their Wives and Children; and so the Matter may be carried on till the whole Toleration is broke through. If one picks at a great Dike that keeps out the Sea,

will be thought, how small a reach soever he makes first, that he designs a total inundation. This seems to weaken and shake the Tradition: So Men will grow jealous, and be on their guard: And by this means we of the Church shall not have so free and so unsuspected an Access to work on their Reasons, which we now do with so much Success, when once their Passions are kindled against us.

The Present State of our Affairs make this yet more unreasonable: It is a Common Maxim, followed even by Persecutors, to keep things quiet at home, when Nations are engaged in War; especially in such a War as this, which is for Universal Monarchy, where all is at stake. There may happen great Accidents in War, and it is no way advisable to raise Discontents or Apprehensions in great numbers at home, which may come to have very ill Effects, when we are in no good Condition to deal with them. I knew somewhat of Foreign Affairs, during the first six or seven Years of the last Reign; it was then the common Topick of the Agents of *France*, in the Courts of our Allies, That *England* was so divided by Factions at home, that there was no trusting to it. No doubt the same Arts are now practised. *Portugal* and *Savoy* are two Allies of the greatest Consequence to us, who have no Strength to resist the Force that will be poured in upon them, but as they hope to be supported by the Treasure, the Fleet, and the Assistance of *England*. Any thing that divides and weakens us, must

give them a melancholy Prospect, and may make very dangerous Impressions on them: Whereas our Union at home, and the maintaining the Happy Calm the Nation is now in, will incline them to depend more firmly on our Treaties with them.

Some things give a just Suspicion, when the Men who promote them, and write for them without doors, are the known and avowed Enemies to the Government; who deny the Queen's Title, and are looking to one beyond-Sea. Can we think that those who separate from our Church, and have raised a Schism in it, can be zealous for the Peace and Order of the Church? They are zealous for somewhat else, and therefore we may well believe their Zeal in this Particular is with a view to that, to which they are driving. One Author who has writ two Books in behalf of this Bill, is known to be the furiousst *Jacobite* in *England*, and does not conceal it even in those Books: In one of these he says he is one called a *High Churchman*.

These are new Terms of Distinction, raised on Design to distract us yet more: I know no High Church but the Church of *Rome*: And that Author, *L-y*, has in another Book shewed us how near he comes to that Church, when he proposes, That a Treaty may be set on foot between Our Convocation, and the Assembly of the Clergy of *France*, and that we should abate the Regal Supremacy, and they the Papal, and then he fancies all other Matters would be easily adjusted. So here we see who are to be called *High Church*. Our Legal



Establishment founded upon the Primitive Pattern is the true Measure of our Church; and those who rise above it are as much out of the way, as those who fall below it. I knew one of the Eminentest *Papists* of the Age, who used often to say, he was for the Church of England as by Law Established: I took the Liberty to ask him, How such a Profession did agree with his Sincerity? He answered, he looked upon the Laws of Queen Mary as yet in full force; for he thought Queen Elizabeth who repealed them, had no more Right to the Crown than *Oliv. Cromwell* had; so that Her Laws were no Laws. I confess, since that time, I have been jealous when I heard some Persons pretend to much Zeal for the Church of England as by Law Established.

The Fury with which this Matter is driven, does heighten the Jealousie: What great Matters could this Bill Produce, if there were not somewhat under it? How comes it that our Bench should be so indecently treated, because we cannot all of us think it seasonable, and do not apprehend that we need it? We have in the whole course of our Lives adhered to the Interest of the Church, at all Perils, and at all Times, without ever once, in any Particular, leaning to the Dissenters; and yet we who have been our whole Life long, by our Labours, and our Writings building up the Church, must now be defamed for Underminers of it, because we cannot comply with other Men's Notions. The Head of our Order is misrepresented, with as much Injustice as Virulence, though he

stood as in the Front of the Church in the most Dangerous Times. Stories are made, and publicly reported of him, which are not so: I love not to use hard Words. This could be the better born, if it were not for the Relations and Dependencies of those who vent them.

I my self have met with a Large share of such Treatments; tho' in no one Step or part of my Life I ever gave the least occasion for it. When I wrote the *History of the Reformation*, for which I had the Thanks of this House, I was then under no Byass. I had neither favour nor Interest to tye me: So that I wrote purely what was my own Sense of things: And yet I took care to mark all the first beginnings of Nonconformity, all the Grounds they went on, and all the Colours that imposed on them, and have shewed the Mistakes and Weakness of every one of them, with an Honesty and Zeal that ought to set me beyond Suspicion. But I own I began the World on a Principle of Moderation, which I have carried down through my whole Life, and which I hope I shall continue to my Life's end. There was a time when those who are now so furious, were perhaps so full of hopes, needed Service, and I had some Credit, which for some Years was chiefly employed in their behalf: Your Lordships will remember with what Vehemence I pleaded for excusing the Deprivation of Bishops from the Oaths. Others were then, and are now in great Posts, who I am confident will do me the Justice to own, that I was then the common Agent both for *Papists* and

ies in distress, for which we are now  
ill rewarded.

I hope I have learned to make the  
Rule, of doing to all others what I  
would have others do to me, the  
Measure of my whole Life. I wish  
all Persons, with Relation to this  
matter, would do as they would be  
done by. The time was, that for some  
years I expected to fall under the Cru-  
elty of that Persecuting Church of  
Geneva; and it was then no small Com-  
fort to me, that I had never been guilty  
of doing any thing like that to others.  
I do not know whether that Danger  
is not yet in view: By the Grace of  
God I will never deprive my self of  
this Comfort, That how hardly so-  
ever I may be treated by others, I  
will never treat any hardly in Mat-  
ter of Conscience.

But now to speak to the Tittle of  
the Bill *Occasional Conformity*: I can-  
not in the General condemn this, but  
it is accompany'd with Error and  
Mistake in the particular Instance.  
My self was an *Occasional Conformist*  
at Geneva and Holland; I thought their  
Churches were irregularly formed,  
under great Defects in their Constitu-  
tion, yet I thought Communion  
with them was lawful, for their Wor-  
ship was not corrupted: But at the  
time I continued my Communi-  
on with our own Church, accord-  
ing to the *Liturgy* of this Church,  
with all that came about me. And  
the Designs of some of those with-  
out Doors, who are the Promoters  
of this Bill, should be brought about,  
among other unpardonable Peo-  
ple, I should not be at first knock'd on  
the Head, but should be driven be-

yond Sea, I in that case would com-  
municate with the Foreign Churches,  
but would likewise gather all of this  
Church about me, and still continue  
to worship God according to the *Li-  
turgy* to my Lives end. And I  
think an *Occasional Conformity* with a  
less perfect Church may well consist  
with the continuing to worship God  
in a more perfect one.

It remains then a point of Opinion,  
which Church of Society is the more  
and which is the less perfect. In  
this I am very sure Our Church is the  
more perfect and regular, and that  
the Separation is formed upon Error  
and Mistake, and that true Edifica-  
tion is among us, and not among  
them. But some of them by an Un-  
happy Education think otherwise.  
And in this they are certainly to  
blame, as they are in every part of  
the Separation: But if it is intended  
to tolerate them under their other Mi-  
stakes, I do not see why this should  
not be tolerated likewise; since it is  
much less dangerous than their other  
Practices that are not at present Com-  
plain'd of. The Noble Historian,  
whom you are all now reading with  
much pleasure, finds great fault with  
those who did not go to the *French*  
Churches, even when they had an  
Ambassadors Chappel to resort to;  
tho' this was certainly an *Occasional*  
*Conformity* with a less perfect  
Church, where there was no obliga-  
tion to go to it, and when they had  
a more perfect one at hand.

It has been a Topick insisted on  
by all who have writ against Dissen-  
ters, from the first beginnings of  
these Disputes down to the present



time, they have been always called on to come as near the Church as they could, and to do all that they could do with a Good Conscience: And therefore before the Wars, great difference was made between the *Puritans*, and the *Brownists*, or *Separists*, on this very account: But now all that is reversed, the *Separists* are well looked on; whereas those who come much nearer us, are Discouraged; tho' we do all see that this is a Step by which many come over entirely to us, and the Children of others do enter into a constant Communion with us. And shall we go to cast a Scandal on this, or discourage it! In my Diocese, those who are Occasional Conformists out of Principle, who come sometimes to Church, and go sometimes to Meetings are without number; who yet have no Office, and seem to pretend to none. I confess, I do not desire to press it hard upon them, that they may not do both; lest this, instead of keeping them from Meetings, hinder them from coming to Church. I have heard but of One in Office in my Diocese, who goes to Meetings; and that is only to a Weekly Lecture. Therefore since *Occasional Conformity* is only to be blamed, when it goes upon an Error, and a mistaken Principle? I do not see why it would be worse treated than the other Errors that are now tolerated; for 'tis that of all the other Errors, which has done the greatest service to the Church:

I now come next to the Bill itself. I Miss a Preamble here, that was in the former Bill, in favour of Toleration; which is now left out. I con-

fess, I do not know how it came to be there; for it did not very well agree with the Bill; especially as it was at first sent up to us. It put one in mind of a Clause in the Sentence of the Courts of Inquisition. When a Heretick is Condemned, and delivered to the Secular Arm, they conjure the Magistratè, by the Mercies of God, and the Bowels of Jesus Christ, that no Harm be done to the obstinate Heretick, neither in Life, nor in Limb. But all this is Farce; for he is to be burnt immediatly. These Words, put in the Preamble, were a solemn Declaration, that could not have been forgot, if other Matters had been afterwards offered at: They are now left out with great Sincerity, no doubt, for those who do not intend to maintain the Toleration, act a very honest part, when they will not profess it.

I know it may be said, let us put in these Words, and stand to them. But still this will not lay the Apprehensions that the leaving out those Words must raise. As if the Original Design of this Bill, was to strike at the Toleration, and that therefore those who have Contrived it, would not limit themselves by words of their own Framing, tho' they may, to carry their Point, consent to their being put in by others, to which they do only give way; which they will not think to be such a Tye on them, as if they had of their own accord put them in, in the first Draught of the Bill.

There are other Words in the Preamble, that do not appear to me to be well grounded. After the Two Acts, the *Corporation-Act*, and the *Test-Act*.

are let forth, it is inferred, That it was intended, that all Men comprehended in them, *should be, and always continue to be,* of the Communion of the Church of *England*. By the first of these Acts, no Man could bear Office in a Corporation, unless he had received the Sacrament within a Year before: And by the other, he who had a Place of Trust was to receive the Sacrament within Three Months after. So by these Acts, it is very true, that no man might be in any Employment, who either *had not been, or was not then,* in the Communion of the Church: But there is not a Clause, nor a Word in either of these Acts, that import, that he *should always continue to be so.*

If the Clause once offered by us in this House had been received, obliging such Persons to come to Church once a Week, and to receive the Sacrament once a Year; that this Obligation would have been very plainly declared: But as it is, since no such Clause appears, I do not see how, in a Recital, we can affirm a thing that has no Foundation. For as unlimited forever our Binding may be, yet in a Recital, a thing must either be as it is let forth to be, or all the Authority on Earth cannot make it to be otherwise than it is.

As for the Enacting Part, when at a proper Time a Bill shall be brought in, disabling all to hold any Employment, except those who continue to be in the Communion of the Church of *England*, I shall assent to it heartily; But for a Fine of Fifty Pounds, I cannot agree to it. That Punishment goes farther than disabling. I cannot agree to any such Clause; nor is it consistent with the Act of Toleration, to lay a heavy Fine for going to a Meeting tolerated by Law. Nor can I consist in the reckoning the Foreign Churches that are Tolerated among us, with those are by name Excepted in the Act of Uniformity, among the Members of the Separatists from our Church. This will have a strange Sound in the World over; and will be a great Discouragement to all who seek Deliverance and Freedom from these things, and that it is not the Will of God among us, nor according to their Will.

For these Reasons I think I ought not now to be engaged, that the Subject should be left to be considered at a more proper Time.

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